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Pennsylvania:

THE GERMAN INFLUENCE IN ITS SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

A Narrative and Critical History

PREPARED BY AUTHORITY OF
THE PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN SOCIETY

PART XVII
GOVERNOR JOSEPH HIESTER



PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY

Publication Committee.

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THE PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN SOCIETY.



Joseph Fuester

Gouverneur Joseph Hiester

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

PART XVII. OF A NARRATIVE AND CRITICAL HISTORY

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THE PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN SOCIETY

BY

HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG RICHARDS

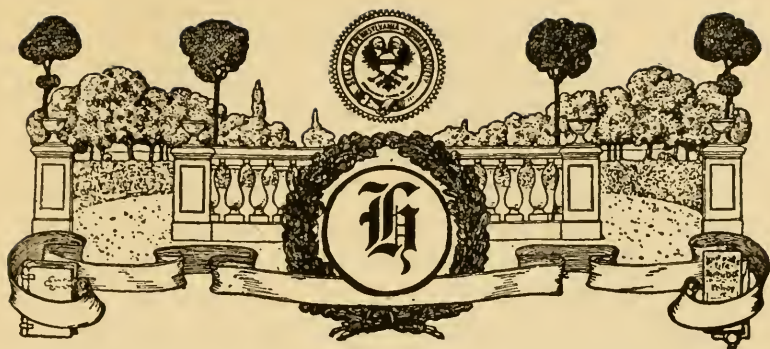


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GOVERNOR JOSEPH HIESTER.



GOVERNOR JOSEPH HIESTER was a distinguished representative of a typical family; one of that class of the population of our great Commonwealth—the Pennsylvania-German—whose blood, in some form, flows through the veins of most of its old families, and whose influence has done much to mould the character of its

people and to place it in the front rank of the great states of this great union.

The remote ancestors of the Hiester family were of Silesian origin. The head of the family was the Knight Premisclorus Hüsterniz, who flourished about 1329, and held the office of mayor, or town captain, of the city of Swineford. In 1480 the Patrician and Counsellor of Swineford, Adolphus Louis, called “der Hiester,” obtained from the Emperor Frederick letters patent authorizing him and his descendants to use the coat-of-arms he

had inherited from his ancestors. The Hiester arms are blazoned, "Azure, a sun, or. Crest: Between two horns, surmounting a helmet affronté, the sun as in the arms." Dr. Laurence Hiester—1637—an eminent surgeon of his day in Germany, was a member of the family. It is most probable that General de Hiester, commanding the Hessian contingent at the battle of Long Island, where he was directly opposed to his American namesake, was likewise a descendant from the same original head. From Silesia the family was distributed throughout Austria, Bavaria, Saxony, Switzerland, and the countries bordering on the river Rhine.

The various members in this country spring from three brothers, John, Joseph and Daniel, who were the sons of John and Catharine Hiester, and emigrated from the town of Elsoff, in the Grafschaft, County of Wittgenstein, province of Westphalia, Germany. Almost without exception the entire offspring of these brothers have occupied honorable stations in life, many of them reaching positions of especial distinction.

The first to arrive in America was John, who reached these shores in 1732, and took up his residence at Goshenhoppen, then in Philadelphia, now Montgomery County. He was followed by Joseph and Daniel, on the ship *St. Andrew*, from Rotterdam, who took the oath of allegiance at Philadelphia on September 26, 1737, and immediately joined their brother. Here Daniel at once purchased a farm, already somewhat improved. After various journeys of exploration, and a better acquaintance with the country, the brothers united in buying a tract of land from the Proprietary Government, between two and three thousand acres in size, in Bern Township of the present Berks County, extending from the Bern church to the

Tulpehocken Creek. Here John and Joseph settled whilst Daniel remained at the old homestead.

I have said the Hiester family was a typical Pennsylvania-German family. Happily, the time has practically passed by when these people can be any longer misunderstood and maligned by those who, frequently, "were not worthy to unloose their shoe's latchet," and it is now generally known that, instead of being either mercenary gentlemen adventurers or the worthless off-scouring from the slums of large cities, their early representatives were, as a rule, worthy descendants of patrician German families, or, possibly, of the better German peasantry, rarely without education, and, still more rarely, without the means of procuring their own homes. They were of the best blood of Europe, who, after generations of ceaseless wars and persecutions, had come to another world where they might worship their God and rear their families in peace. Here, to save their new homes, and protect their more fortunate neighbors in "the lower counties," they stood like a living wall behind the Blue Range and stopped the encroachment of the savage during the French and Indian war. Here, again, when British oppression once more threatened their liberty, like one man they espoused the cause of American freedom, and history, too long silent, is beginning to tell somewhat of their deeds in the up-building of this nation. *There were no Tories amongst the Pennsylvania-Germans.* In these momentous events many of the Hiesters were most prominent. Indeed, practically without exception, every male member of the family, of suitable age, took up arms in defense of his country's liberty.

Of the three brothers, Daniel, the youngest, was born Jan. 1, 1713. For many years he resided in Old Goshen-

hoppen, Upper Salford township of Montgomery County, immediately below the present village of Sumneytown. He acquired much property, built a fine, two-story brick mansion in 1757, still standing, and became prominent. In the year 1774 he removed to Berks County and took up his residence in Reading. He married Catharine Schuler, daughter of Gabriel Schuler, died June 7, 1795, and is buried beside his wife (to the right of her) at the stone Bern church, Berks County. They have a common grave-stone. Their issue was as follows:

1. Anna Margaretha, b. June 26, 1743, m. May 23, 1761, Philip Hahn, of New Hanover Township, d. Feb. 11, 1820, buried at Falkner Swamp Reformed church, Montgomery County.

2. John, b. April 9, 1745, m. Hannah Pawling, d. Oct. 15, 1821, at Pottstown, Pa. During the Revolution he was Captain 1st company, 4th battalion, Chester County militia, 1777, Colonel William Evans, and later, captain 1st battalion, 1777, Colonel John Haunum. After the war he became major general of militia. From 1802 to 1806 he represented Chester County in the State Senate, and, from 1807 to 1809, in the National Congress.

3. Daniel, b. June 25, 1747, m. about 1770 Rosanna Hager, of Hagerstown, Md., d. March 7, 1804, in Washington, D. C. He was commissioned colonel of the Philadelphia County militia in 1777, and saw a variety of active service until May 23, 1782, when he was promoted to brigadier general. He was a member of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Congress, from Pennsylvania, and likewise served from 1800 to March 7, 1804, the date of his death, as a member from Maryland.

4. Gabriel, b. June 17, 1749, m. about 1773, Elizabeth Bausman, d. Sept. 1, 1824, on the ancestral farm in Bern

Township, Berks County. He was a member of the convention of July 15, 1776; major of militia during the campaign of 1776-7; member of the Assembly, except for two or three years, from 1778 to 1790; member of the House of Representatives in 1791, and, again, from 1802 to 1804; State Senator in 1795-6, also from 1805 to 1812.

5. Catharine, b. Sept. 30, 1751, m. Jonathan Bischoff.

6. Samuel, b. April 17, 1754, d. in childhood.

7. William, b. June 10, 1757, m. March 18, 1784, Anna Maria Myers, d. July 13, 1822. Notwithstanding his youth he was enrolled and served in one campaign of the Revolutionary war, in Captain George Wills' company of his brother Major Gabriel Hiester's battalion, 1777.

Joseph, the next brother, was born about 1710 and died about 1772, before the commencement of the war. He was married to Elizabeth Strunk. His life was passed, uneventfully, on the farm in Bern Township, and his remains rest in the graveyard of the old church nearby. He left a more numerous progeny than either of his brothers. The immediate children were:

1. John, b. Sept. 25, 1754, m. Catharine Albright, d. Sept. 17, 1826.

2. John Christian, m. Susanna Rieser.

3. Catharine, b. 1758, m. Nicholas Lieb, d. Sept. 3, 1813.

4. Daniel, b. Nov. 5, 1761, d. April 16, 1827, m. 1st Magdalena Albright, 2d Barbara Kauffman, 3d Susan Auman.

5. Ann Eliza, b. April 8, 1766, m. Jacob Van Reed.

6. Joseph, b. Aug. 4, 1768, m. Elizabeth Beck, d. April 16, 1830.

7. William, b. Nov. 11, 1770, m. Anna Maria Bentz, d. Feb. 8, 1828.

It will be seen that but one, or two at most, of the male members of this branch were capable of bearing arms. Whether either did so serve their country cannot be told from the imperfect records at hand.

The last, and eldest, of the brothers was John, the father of the subject of this biography, born in 1707, died in 1757 on the homestead in Bern Township, where he also lies buried in the same graveyard with his brother. He was married to Mary Barbara Epler, b. Aug. 16, 1732, d. Oct. 5, 1809, a daughter of one of the first settlers in that section of the country. Their descendants were:

1. Catharine, b. Sept. 16, 1750, d. June 24, 1824, m. John Ruth.

2. Joseph, the governor.

3 and 4. Sons, who died young and whose names are not recorded.

Joseph, then, was the only living son of his father. He was born on the farm in Bern Township, Berks County, Pa., Nov. 18, 1752. He grew up a farmer's boy, learning the manifold duties pertaining to his occupation, doubtless often weary and, possibly, at times longing for a change to something less monotonous, but still always breathing in Heaven's pure air and reading lessons from nature's picture book which he might seek in vain elsewhere. It is a fact worth remembering that, from lads so situated, have sprung some of our greatest men. He frequently took pleasure, during his later years, in relating his experiences at that time. He was put to the plow so young that, when it struck a stump or stone, and was thrown from the furrow, he was unable to replace it until it had

run quite a distance, and if, perchance, he caught a root the rebound would be sufficient to throw him to the ground. His sources of amusement were those common to the country, with a chance visit, on special occasions, to Reading, but a few miles distant, then a village of less than two thousand inhabitants, which doubtless looked as great in his eyes as does now, to the more experienced traveler, the busy, prosperous and beautiful city of 100,000 people to which it has since grown.

Opportunities for the acquisition of an education are generally denied the pioneer settler, who removes himself and family far from the places where learning is taught. But, whilst this rule holds good with probably every other nationality, it does not hold good in the case of the German emigrant. Coming, as he did, from a land where it was discreditable to lack in the ordinary rudiments of knowledge, and, imbued as he was, with a strong religious sentiment, his first care, in his new home, was to erect a log church and procure a pastor, so that whilst the body was well cared for the soul might not lack its still more important "bread of life"; his next step was the establishment of a parochial school in connection with the church, that there might be no want of nourishment for the brain. This school was held at times in the church during the week, but rather, when possible, in a separate building erected for the purpose. Occasionally instruction was imparted by the pastor himself, but, more generally, by a school-master, whose position was second only to that of the clergyman. But, whether pastor or school-master, he was always an educated man, and the knowledge thus received became so solid a foundation that on it many a pupil was enabled to rear a lasting and beautiful fabric. Such a school had the old Bern church, situate about one

mile south from Joseph's home, and this he attended in the intervals of his farm labors. The Bern church was probably organized about 1739. In 1743 ground was purchased, and on it a log house erected, which gave place, about 1762, to a rough stone building. This stood until 1837 when replaced by the present edifice. It was, originally, the exclusive property of a German Reformed congregation, but became, later, a Union (Reformed and Lutheran) church. It is to be regretted that the existing records of this old congregation are so imperfect as to make it impossible to ascertain the name of its school-master from 1760 to 1770. It is possible that Mr. Good, the great-grandfather of Rev. James I. Good, D.D., of Reading, Pa., may have been the incumbent as early as 1770, although it is more likely he occupied the position a year or two later.

Feeling, doubtless, the lack of opportunity at his quiet country home to satisfy a proper ambition and elevate himself somewhat in the world, he removed to Reading before he had reached the period of legal manhood, and entered the general merchandise store of Adam Witman. He had been there but a short time when he not only gained a satisfactory knowledge of his employer's business, but he gained something else—the heart of his employer's daughter, Elizabeth. In 1771 they were united in blissful wedlock, and, for a few years, the stream of life flowed on quietly, peacefully and happily, during which time he was associated with his father-in-law in the business upon which he had entered.

In the meanwhile, however, the clouds had been gathering ominously over the land, and, at last, in 1775, the storm broke which was ordained by God to sweep away the last vestige of British rule and oppression in this coun-

try, to make us a free people, to bring to the surface the latent manhood and ability in Joseph Hiester, and to elevate him, eventually, to the highest position in the gift of this great Commonwealth. The news of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill had spread, like wildfire, over the land. He had already seen Captain George Nagle's company of riflemen, the "First Defenders" of the Revolution, march away from Reading to join Washington before Boston, which place they reached July 18, 1775, barely one month after the call for volunteers sent out by Congress June 14th. Then came the evacuation of Boston, the gathering of troops and formation of armies for the terrible and momentous struggle which was now apparent to all. The time for action was at hand, and, when that time came, young Hiester, though still but a comparative youth, put behind him all thoughts of business, even of those he loved most, and, without any hope of honor or emolument, stepped to the front, offered his services and, if need be, his life to his country, and began his public career.

To understand this career upon which he entered it seems almost necessary to briefly trace the events, especially in Pennsylvania, which led up to his time. With the peace of 1763 came general rejoicing, shared equally between the mother country and her American colonies which had aided materially in bringing it about. But England soon found herself laboring under the increased debt occasioned by the war. How should these obligations be met? The ministry finally determined that the colonies must stand their proportion of the tax, basing their action upon the specious argument that this was just and right because the debt had been incurred on their account, and forgetting that the colonies were already bearing more than their

share of the debt in question. The two measures by which this policy was publicly avowed were the Sugar Bill and the proposed Stamp Act. This at once raised an energetic protest from nearly all the American colonies. The Massachusetts House of Representatives ordered a committee of correspondence with the other colonies, and James Otis, in a pamphlet, exclaimed, "that by this (the British) constitution, every man in the dominion is a free man; that no part of His Majesty's dominions can be taxed without their consent." In other words, if the colonies have no representatives in Parliament to voice their opinion and vote accordingly, then Parliament has no right to tax them. Nevertheless, on March 14, 1764, there was reported to the House of Commons what is ordinarily called the "Sugar Act," whereby England was given a monopoly of the colonial commerce and production, much to the detriment of the Americans, as they were forbidden to take advantage of higher prices offered by other governments for their material. The Act was passed without meeting with opposition, and, at the same time, the House of Commons resolved "that it may be proper to charge certain stamp duties in the colonies," but Mr. Grenville postponed legislation on this proposition for one year, until the feeling of the colonies might be better ascertained. Then came another indignant protest from across the ocean. Washington, at the time a burgess of Virginia, called it "this unconstitutional method of taxation," and the Assemblies of the colonies unanimously and vigorously opposed it. Notwithstanding all this it was duly enacted into a law on March 22, 1765. The excitement was intense. Upon the proposition of Massachusetts it was decided that delegates from the several colonies should meet in convention and agree upon united action. This resulted

in the first congress of the colonies, which met at New York on October 5, 1765, nine colonies being represented, amongst them Pennsylvania, whose delegates were John Dickinson, Joseph Fox (Speaker of the Assembly), with Messrs. Bryan and Morton.

Inharmonious as were, generally, the meetings of this congress, and what else could be expected, yet it resulted in a "Declaration of Rights and Liberties," on October 19th, which notwithstanding their temperate tone, may be said to have foretold the near birth of the new nation. In it were expressed these principles: No taxation without direct representation, which representation was, because of geographical position, practically impossible; all supplies furnished the crown by the colonies are free gifts of the people; the inherent right of trial by jury.

At once "non-importation and non-consumption" became the watchword of the Americans; it was found impossible to enforce the Stamp Act, and, with the advent of the Rockingham Ministry into power, to the great joy of every one it was finally repealed, after a violent struggle in the House of Commons, on February 22, 1766. Accompanying the repeal, however, was the famous declaratory resolve of Parliament, which seemed necessary to save the pride of the ministry, that they still had the "right" to tax the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

Joy soon gave way to new forebodings with the advent of the following year, when another effort was made by Parliament to increase the revenues by the imposition of duties on paints, glass, tea, etc. Worse still the moneys so derived were to be applied to paying the expenses of the troops quartered in the colonies, as well as the royal judges and governors. The feeling against England grew in bitterness and, by the summer of 1768, became intensely

hostile, so much so that the mother country felt some decided action was necessary and dispatched a vessel of war, with two regiments of troops, under General Gage, to Boston harbor, to preserve order and protect the custom house officers. Threats of changing the charter were made, and it was proposed to remove to England for trial those persons who were charged with certain offences against the crown. A perpetual irritation was kept up between the officers of the English Government in Boston and the townspeople, culminating in what is ordinarily called the "Boston massacre," March 5, 1770. The events which gradually followed this occurrence, and the sufferings of the people of Massachusetts in general, but of Boston in particular, because of oppressive Parliamentary acts are familiar, and we are not surprised that in 1774, she sent an appeal to her sister colonies for material aid. It resulted in the convention of the First Continental Congress at Philadelphia on September 5, 1774. The delegates from Pennsylvania were Messrs. Galloway, the Speaker of the Assembly, Rhoads, Mifflin, Humphreys, Morton, George Ross and Edward Biddle. This body, whilst reaffirming their allegiance to the Royal Government, petitioned the King for redress, and determined upon non-commercial intercourse so long as the wrongs remained unabated.

We have seen the evils which gave birth to the Continental Congress. It was this Congress which led our nation safely through the Revolutionary war and issued the famous Declaration of Independence. This great paper, however, came into being only through mighty travail, and as the German representatives of Pennsylvania, of which Joseph Hiester was one, were mainly instrumental in its existence, we dare not neglect the part taken by that colony in said events.

Not all the colonies were of one mind as to the course to be taken in dealing with Great Britain. Massachusetts, which had suffered much, was naturally most aggressive. Hardly had the first congress adjourned, October 26, 1774, when she organized and armed her militia, and, eventually, precipitated the hostilities which opened the war. Pennsylvania, on the other hand, had suffered but little. Then, again, her population was not of a homogeneous character. About one third of her people were English Quakers, who were essentially law-abiding, patient and long-suffering, with a religion which discountenanced armed resistance; another third were the Germans, speaking a different language, with a kindly feeling towards the followers of Penn who had afforded them a peaceful asylum in the New World, and unmolested, as yet, by any overt acts of British oppression; the balance was made up of a variety of peoples, the majority being Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. It was but natural, therefore, that, at this period of history, she should be somewhat more conservative than her sister colonies, and hold rather more tenaciously to the idea of non-separation from the mother country, a feeling expressed by all the colonies alike, to be sure, but one which was undergoing more rapid changes elsewhere.

Events, however, were hastening on. Very unfortunately, the respectful address of the first congress to the King, pleading for redress and reconciliation, seems to have been misunderstood, and was, accordingly, "pigeon-holed." Still more unfortunately, new measures of oppression, and of a more general character, were instituted. Blood had been shed at Lexington and Bunker Hill; troops had been raised by the various colonies to form an army, in which duty the Assembly of Pennsylvania had

been by no means negligent; the people were becoming more generally aroused, and far-seeing men already began to realize the necessity and certainty of separation from England. When, therefore, Congress again convened in 1776 an effort was made, by the New England delegates in particular, to bring about such separation. The motion was made by Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, and seconded by John Adams, of Massachusetts, on June 7, 1776, "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

The success or failure of the motion depended upon the action of the Pennsylvania delegates. With John Dickinson at their head they immediately opposed it, and remained firm in their opposition. Of the sincerity of their motives there can be no question, and no imputation dare be cast upon them. They felt the action to be premature. But, whether right or wrong, the result was the same. It became certain that so long as these gentlemen represented the colony the Congress could not hope to pass the motion, and how to obtain another representation was a puzzling question. They were the duly accredited delegates of a legal Assembly.

The Assembly of Pennsylvania differed from many others. Its members were elected by a limited suffrage, under the charter granted by William Penn in 1701, and it was composed, in a great measure, of those whose religious principles forbade them to declare or maintain war. Each member was obliged to take an oath of allegiance to George III before entering upon his duties. It was but natural that such a body should be cautious and conserva-

tive under the circumstances. Their first endeavor was to preserve the charter under which they acted, and then to postpone a separation from the mother country. The popular clamor, however, against them was very great, and they were obliged to make continual concessions. The German element had now fully awakened to a thorough understanding of the events transpiring about them, and were become intensely loyal. The Scotch-Irish had always been antagonistic to the British cause, and the newspapers were filled with articles reflecting upon the members because of their oaths of supremacy and obedience to the King.

Alarmed and somewhat panic-stricken by the popular demands made upon it the Assembly abdicated somewhat of its power even more rapidly than those opposed to it had expected. On May 24th a resolution was offered that a committee be appointed to report upon a plan "rendering the naturalization laws hitherto in force, and the oaths or affirmations of allegiance, unnecessary in all cases where they are required or have been usually taken in this colony." Previous to that, on March 15th, another resolution had already been passed providing for seventeen additional representatives—four from the city, two each from Lancaster, York, Cumberland, Berks and Northampton, and one each from Bedford, Northumberland and Westmoreland. It utterly refused, however, to rescind its instructions to the delegates in Congress.

This body, weary of long delay and finally hopeless of a satisfactory conclusion, somewhat arbitrarily, it must be admitted, cut the gordian knot by recommending, May 15th, to each colony, the adoption of a new constitution for their better government, where the exigency of affairs might render such action necessary. It was unquestionably

intended to be a blow aimed at the life of the Proprietary Government. To add to the discomfiture of the Assembly the battalions of associators rebelled against its authority. Still the Assembly remained firm in its purpose and determination not to establish a new government. At last the members of the Whig party held a meeting in the State House Yard on May 20th and applied to the "Committee of Inspection and Observation of the City and Liberties" to call a conference of the committees of the several counties, that these committees might direct the election of a convention which should frame a new constitution. This conference met in Philadelphia, on June 18th, calling themselves "Conferees and Delegates of the people of Pennsylvania for forming a plan for executing the resolution of Congress passed on the 15th of May." At their head were men like Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Colonel McKean, and, however revolutionary the action may have been, it was made necessary by the condition of affairs. For the first time in its history Pennsylvania was no longer under the rule of English law but was beginning to be "a government of the people, by the people and for the people." The old Assembly still attempted to meet thereafter but failed of a quorum, and finally died a natural death of "innocuous desuetude."

It was this convention, representing the wishes of a majority of the people of Pennsylvania, which cast its vote for separation from the mother country, and thus made possible the Declaration of Independence. For the first time in the history of the State men of German extraction had been elected representatives, and, as representation was in accordance with population and counties, these men held the balance of power and gave the deciding vote. Who can deny then the assertion that *were it*

not for the loyal and patriotic Pennsylvania-Germans there might never have been a Declaration of Independence, and that, to this day, these great and United States might still be dependent colonies of Great Britain.

The ten men in the convention from Berks County were: Col. Jacob Morgan, Col. Henry Haller, Col. Benjamin Spyker, Col. Daniel Hunter, Col. Valentine Eckert, Col. Nicholas Lutz, Capt. Joseph Hiester, Dr. Bodo Otto, Mark Bird and Charles Shoemaker, all men great in brave deeds for their country, whose names may well be immortalized, and not the least deserving among them was Joseph Hiester.

This convention met June 18, 1776, at Carpenter Hall, Philadelphia, and, by adjournments, continued in session until June 25th. It was distinguished for its vigor and patriotism. Amongst those elected to it from Philadelphia were Benjamin Franklin, Col. Thomas McKean, Col. Timothy Matlack and Dr. Benj. Rush, also many zealous and distinguished men from the interior. Col. McKean was chosen president.

They resolved to call a Provincial Convention "for the express purpose of forming a new government in this province *on the authority of the people only.*" On this Hiester voted in the affirmative.

They further resolved that no person should be permitted to vote for members of the proposed convention who should not, on oath or affirmation, declare, "I do not hold myself bound to bear allegiance to George III, King of Great Britain," and, further, "I will oppose any measure that shall or may interfere with or obstruct the religious principles of any of the good people of this Province." Again Hiester voted in the affirmative.

Then followed a resolution, on June 23d, that Thomas

McKean, Benj. Rush, and Col. Smith be a committee to draft a resolution in favor of the "Independence of the Province of Pennsylvania from the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain," in favor of which he again voted, and, subsequently, on June 24th, also in favor of the report of the committee to declare "the United Colonies free and independent States."

This conference, of sound and worthy patriots, likewise recommended to the people of Pennsylvania to, forthwith, make a levy of 4,500 troops, in addition to the men already in service, and finally adjourned on June 25, 1776, after a session of eight days.

The names alone of the actors in this most important drama are sufficient evidence to show that they were men of deeds, fully equal to the words they had just uttered. Mr. Hiester at once hastened home to raise a company of volunteer "Associators," for active service, as a part of the so-called "Flying camp." Full of enthusiasm, young, vigorous and influential, he was quickly successful. On July 10th, by beat of drum, he gathered his fellow townsmen about him, then, in an address full of patriotism, he laid the condition of affairs before them. He explained the need of their country for soldiers, and the call of their State for volunteers, with the situation of their beloved general, Washington, then, already, believed to be perilous, and ended up by requesting them to join his new company as recruits. Laying down the sum of \$40 upon his drum head he said, "I will give this sum as a bounty, and the appointment of a sergeant, to the first man who will subscribe the articles of association to form a volunteer company, to march, forthwith, and join the commander-in-chief, and I also pledge myself to furnish the company with blankets and necessary funds for their equipment,

and on the march." This promise he honorably and faithfully fulfilled. After a moment's consideration Matthias Babb stepped forward, from amongst his neighbors, signed the articles and took the money from the drum head. His example, and the further inducements of smaller sums of money, caused twenty more recruits to join that same evening, and, by July 20th, the total number enrolled footed up ninety-six. When we recall that the total population of Reading, at this time, was less than two thousand, we can readily see that the showing in question was most creditable.

The quota of Berks County, in the levy of 4,500, was 666 men. Recruiting went on at a lively rate. Notices were sent out and meetings held in all parts of the county; in a short time the entire quota was raised and one company besides. Mr. Hiester was most active in all this work, and, because of his liberality and popularity, it was soon seen that he would undoubtedly be chosen by the soldiers as the commanding officer of the regiment. Just before this culminating point was reached, however, it is said that Mr. Henry Haller, a fellow-citizen of Reading, came to him and frankly admitted his desire to be Colonel of the regiment, at the same time acknowledging that, without his consent, it would be impossible to obtain the position, and requesting his co-operation, which, of course, meant his withdrawal from the candidacy. Mr. Hiester heard, with patient attention, all that was argued and suggested by Mr. Haller, and then said, "The office you seek must be the gift of our fellow soldiers, but I do assure you I am not anxious for command or distinction, further than they may enable me the more effectually to serve our country. I will willingly yield all claim rather than that our country shall not have your services." The declara-

tion thus made was followed up by Mr. Hiester who fully conversed with the troops, declined to be a candidate himself and urged the election of Mr. Haller.

His ready acquiescence in this instance led to a similar request from Mr. Edward Burd, who was anxious to obtain the position of major and yet knew how hopeless his efforts would be so long as Mr. Hiester was in the field. Again he consented, and once more used his influence to assure the election of his neighbor, content to assume, for himself, the more humble rank of a captain.

I trust the reader will feel that these incidents are told, not to reflect upon the two gentlemen named, whose faithful service to their country places them above harsh criticism, but merely to show the character of the man whose biography we are sketching, and to bring out the spirit of unselfish patriotism which animated him and influenced all his actions.

The battalion to which Captain Hiester belonged was officered as follows: Colonel, Henry Haller; Lieut.-Colonel, Nicholas Lutz; Major, Edward Burd; Captains, Jacob Graul, Joseph Hiester, Jacob Maurer, John Ludwig, John Old, ——— Douglass, and Peter Decker. Unfortunately the muster roll of Capt. Hiester's company is not in existence, and we have only mention besides Matthias Babb of Nicholas Brown, his ensign, and Stephen Futterer, a private. They formed the Third Battalion of Pennsylvania Associators.

The men were well equipped, and started out promptly to reinforce the main army. Colonel Haller, however, was unable to accompany them, being obliged to remain back and attend to the organization of the other companies of "Associators" still forming. The battalion, therefore, went through the impending campaign under

command of Lieut.-Colonel Lutz, and is better known as "Lutz's Battalion." Upon their arrival at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, they were met by Lord Stirling who had been sent to expedite the march of the American troops and, from him, learned that Washington was busily engaged in preparing to oppose the momentarily expected advance, on New York City, of the British under General Howe, who with nearly 30,000 troops, composed of English, Highlanders and Hessians, lay in the Lower Bay.

Now we come to an incident which, whilst reflecting renewed credit upon our young captain, must be read with charity and understanding, in so far as it refers to his men. The sudden approach of danger and unexpected call to immediate active service, came with too little warning to men who had just left their homes. Then, again, we must remember that the so-called "Associators" were merely what are now denominated as "militia," amongst whom the principal feeling was that they had enlisted mainly to defend their own homes and locality. Had the very same men been recruits in the Pennsylvania Line Regiments, then just forming, they would have been prepared to march anywhere, as ordered. What now took place was only what has occurred in every war since then. When the orders to march into New York came as they did, and so unexpectedly, the soldiers refused to obey them, declaring that it was unreasonable to ask them to go further. How far the disaffection spread we do not know, but we are aware that it included the men of Captain Graul's company, as well as a portion of Captain Hiester's. It was a critical and painful state of affairs. What could be done to obviate it? Drawing his men around him, in a compact body, Captain Hiester pleaded with them in such honest, suitable and impassioned language that their hearts

went out to him and beat in unison with his. One who was present on the occasion said, "I wish to God I could tell you what the Captain said, and how the men looked and felt." "You have marched thus far," said he, "resolved to fight your country's foes, and defend your homes and families, and will you now prove cowards, and desert your country when your country most needs your help? I would be ashamed to return home with you! I will go forward, yes, if I go by myself! I will go and join General Washington as a volunteer, as a private, and, if you will not go, I will go alone; but, surely, you will not turn your backs upon the enemy, and leave your country at their mercy. I will try you once again. Fall in! Fall in to your ranks, men, and those who are ready to fight for freedom and America will, when the drum beats and the word is given, march to join George Washington!" The men fell in, shouldered their muskets, the drums were beat, and, at the command "March!" every one stepped out save three, who hesitated but a moment and then hurried to join their comrades. Three cheers were given and they were on the road to Long Island.

At New York there was one whose eyes anxiously watched, not only for them but for all possible reinforcements. The enemy was about to advance on this important city; the Declaration of Independence had just been made, and all looked for victory to give encouragement to the new-born cause, yet none knew better than himself how little prepared he was to accomplish the great deeds expected of him. However, all possible preparations were made for the conflict at hand, and as the salvation of the entire American army engaged in it eventually hung upon the bravery of the Pennsylvanians, especially the troops

from the German counties of Berks and Northampton, of which our Reading contingency was a part, we dare not pass by its details too lightly.

To stem the approaching storm Washington had, nominally, some 27,000 troops, mostly militia, of whom one fourth were invalids and another fourth scarcely furnished with arms. To protect all possible points of attack, it was necessary that the American army should occupy various positions. The main body lay on the island of New York, which seemed destined to receive the first blows of the English. Two feeble detachments guarded Governors Island and the point of Paulus Hook. The militia of the Province, under General Clinton, were posted upon the banks of the Sound where they occupied the two Chesters, East and West, and New Rochelle, to prevent the enemy from penetrating to Kingsbridge, and thus locking up the Americans on the island of New York.

One corps only was stationed on Long Island, numbering not over 5,000 men, under the orders of General Greene, who was obliged, however, to relinquish his command to General Sullivan because of sickness. The right of this corps, under General Lord Stirling, rested on the shore, within the southern boundary of the present Greenwood cemetery. Colonel Atlee, of the Musketry Battalion, with the other Pennsylvanians, of which Lutz's Battalion and that of Lieut.-Colonel Kichlein, of Northampton County, were a part, lay south of Gowanus Bay, close to the water (near Twenty-third street), and were the extreme right. Next to them were the Delaware troops, under Colonel Hazlet, and the Maryland Regiment of Colonel Smallwood. Sullivan's centre lay amongst the wooded hills, guarding the Flatbush Pass, now Battle Pass, in Prospect Park. Colonel Miles, and his Battalion,

the Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment, occupied the extreme left. It was the latter's duty to guard the road by Flatland, and scour the country over to Jamaica to prevent a flank movement by the British. In spite of the ease with which this could have been done the duty was, most unfortunately, neglected, and was instrumental in the terrible disaster which followed. Colonel Miles, probably, was not alone to blame in his negligence, as both Generals Putnam and Sullivan felt equally assured of the fact that the British attack would be on their right and centre. The front door was securely locked and the back door wide open.

Opposed to the American right was the British left, 2,000 men and ten cannon, under General Grant; their centre was composed of the Hessians, 8,000 in number, and, with fully 8,000 more and a train of artillery, under Clinton, Cornwallis and Percy, the enemy started, during the night, to circumvent the American left. Nearly twenty thousand trained and well-equipped veteran soldiers against five thousand raw recruits.

This was the condition of affairs on the night of August 26, 1776. To divert attention from their movement towards Jamaica the British prepared to attack fiercely the American right on the early morning of the 27th. General Stirling's outpost lay at the Red Lion Inn, near the Narrows, on the Martense Lane leading from the old Flatbush and New Utrecht road to the Gowanus road, running by Gowanus Cove to the village of Brooklyn. Here Major Edward Burd, of Lutz's Battalion, with some 200 men, was stationed. At this point the British effected their landing, and, about midnight, a force, under Colonel Dalrymple, suddenly fell upon Major Burd, surrounded him, and, after a short fight, compelled the surrender of

nearly the whole party. The indications are that Captain Hiester was amongst those captured at this time. The alarm was at once communicated to General Putnam, in the rear, who at 3 a. m. ordered a Maryland, Delaware and Connecticut regiment forward to reinforce the Pennsylvania-Germans under Colonel Kichlein, who had formed across the Martense Lane and, unflinchingly, were holding in check the British advance. At last, under their galling fire, the enemy were compelled to retreat, and Colonel Atlee's skirmishers, to which belonged the remnant of Lutz's Battalion, who had been driven back along the Gowanus road but now bravely led the reinforcements under Stirling, were enabled to reoccupy their early position.

General Grant, having been reinforced by two regiments from the British fleet, lay within half a mile of the Americans, and for six hours, desultory, and, at times, hard fighting went on, but the enemy did not seem to care to force an issue. The reason for this was very clear, and soon apparent. The main force of the British, finding the American left but poorly guarded, had flanked Colonel Miles' Rifle Regiment, and, after severe fighting, with much loss to the Americans, had doubled them up on Sullivan's centre, which was busily engaged with the Hessians under De Hiester. Overwhelmed by the enemy on both sides the American centre was at once put to flight, and the Hessians immediately fell upon Stirling's rear. At the same moment Grant, who was but waiting this occurrence, fiercely attacked the Pennsylvanians in front. Colonel Atlee's skirmishers were soon slaughtered or made prisoners. After bravely fighting and repulsing, with heavy loss, various detachments of British troops they noticed the Hessians coming down their left flank and at-

tempting to surround them. The Colonel then ordered a party of Lutz's Battalion to join him in an attempt to break through the enemy's lines, but the number of Americans was so small compared to the host of those opposed to them that they considered the risk too great and hesitated so long that they were driven back into the woods. Here a council of officers was held, but, even whilst deliberating upon their course of action, the Hessians poured in upon them such a heavy volley from the edge of the woods as to completely disperse those that still remained in the command. Colonel Atlee, Captain John Nice and Ensign Henderson, keeping together, managed to gather about them some twenty men from the different battalions, and, with them, were about to make an attempt to force their way through the enemy when they suddenly came upon a large body of Hessians, as they turned out to be, for they were deceived by their uniforms of blue with red trimmings, took them for some of their own people, and allowed them to approach within fifty yards when they received a volley. Retreating from these superior numbers they had proceeded about one hundred and fifty yards when they saw, close to them, a battalion of Highlanders who immediately fired into them. Running through the woods they came to the lowlands where another strong body of Hessians met them and fired on them, one of the enemy being so bold as to charge into their midst where he was killed by the Americans. Finding they were pursued they ran across a swamp, where the water and mud was up to their knees, and took position on higher ground just in time to receive another volley from their right. They had gone a short distance further towards the Jamaica Road when they were joined by Colonel Lutz and four men, the sole remnant of his battalion, under com-

mand. Here they paused for council. Finding themselves completely hemmed in on every side, and further resistance not only useless but fatal, they decided to avoid the Hessians, whose cruelty they feared, and surrender to the British should they meet them. On coming out of the wood they saw two battalions of Highlanders facing them, as well as the Hessians who kept firing at them constantly. Clubbing their muskets, in token of submission, the twenty-five men who were left were given quarter by the British and sent to headquarters under guard.

General Stirling, attacked in the rear, gathered some three hundred brave Marylanders about him, directing the remainder of his forces to retreat as best they could, and then fought until his soldiers had fallen, almost to a man, under the fire and bayonets of the Hessians and British of Cornwallis, when he surrendered his sword to De Hiester. The Connecticut regiment soon met the fate of Colonel Atlee's Pennsylvanians, and then Grant's entire force fell upon the unaided Pennsylvania-Germans under Colonel Kichlein, who alone were left to stem the tide of British victory. Were they to give way it might mean destruction to the fleeing American army now seeking shelter under the guns of Putnam's fortifications at Gowanus Cove. Though they had been left in "the jaws of death," manfully they stood their ground in the face of overwhelming foes, under the Greenwood Hills, where, to-day, a monument marks the scene of their heroism. General Grant, who had boasted that with 5,000 British soldiers "he could march from one end of the colonies to the other," had already fallen dead beneath the unerring aim of one of their riflemen. Many another foe was made to "bite the dust," but the issue could be of no uncertain character. One by one these noble men fell, until, at last,

the brave regiment was no more, many of its members having been actually massacred, pinned to trees by the enemy's bayonet, slaughtered in cold blood. Of the company from Easton, Colonel Kichlein's home, which went into the battle with less than one hundred men, seventy-one were either killed, wounded, or captured, amongst the wounded being their brave commander. It has been truly said, by an abler pen than the writer's, that "Long Island was the Thermopylæ of the Revolution, and the Pennsylvania-Germans were its Spartans."

Whilst Captain Hiester, who was probably made prisoner in the early part of the engagement, may not have been called upon to bear his share of the later strife, who will say that he would not have valiantly taken his place by the side of his countrymen had it been otherwise? It is to be regretted that no list is extant of the losses in his company or battalion. We have merely a partial list of the officers captured, who were Lieut.-Colonel Lutz, Major Burd and Captains Graul, Hiester, Maurer and Decker, with Lieutenant Stephen Baldy.

The treatment of their prisoners by the British, at New York, will ever be a foul blot on their name. Their victory at Brooklyn, and subsequent capture of Fort Washington in the following November, placed some 4,000 prisoners in their hands, which number was constantly augmented by the arrest of private citizens, capture of privaters, etc. The only two prisons in the city were the "new" jail, still standing, though much altered, as the Hall of Records, and the Bridewell, located in the space between the present City Hall and Broadway. These were quickly filled to overflowing when other buildings were occupied, such as several of the churches, the hospital, and Columbia College, but especially three large

THE PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN SOCIETY.



THE SUGAR HOUSE PRISON, LIBERTY STREET FRONT.

sugar houses—Rhinelanders', on the corner of William and Duane streets; Van Courtlandt's, on the northwest corner of Trinity churchyard and Thames street; and a third, the most noted, a five-story stone building which stood a few feet east of the middle Dutch church, at what is now Nos. 34 and 36 Liberty street.

These still proving inadequate various transports were turned into prison ships. At first these hulks lay in the Hudson and East rivers, but many were eventually anchored in the Wallabout. Amongst them were the *Whitby*, the *Prince of Wales*, the *Good Hope*, the *Stromboli*, *Scorpion*, *Hunter*, *Jersey*, *John*, *Falmouth*, *Mentor*, *Chatham*, *Kitty*, *Frederick*, *Glasgow*, *Woodlands*, *Scheldt*, and *Clyde*.

Of all these the old *Jersey* won the most infamous notoriety. The old "Hell," as she was called, had been originally, a sixty-four gun battleship. Her port holes were securely closed and four small holes, twenty inches square, were cut through for, so-called, ventilation, and protected by iron bars. For a short time during the day the prisoners were allowed to be on deck, but, at sunset, they were driven below and huddled together in the foul, fetid hold till morning. Their incredible sufferings during the hot summer nights, without pure air, cannot be told and hardly imagined. This, coupled with insufficient and poor food, made the death rate enormous. Every morning the brutal cry of the British soldier down the hatchway, "Bring up the dead!" never failed to secure an active and plentiful response. Whilst the lifeless bodies were hastily interred on the adjoining shore, additional living bodies took their places, and so the harvest never failed. It is estimated that the deaths, on the *Jersey* alone, footed up, at the close of the war, the horrible total of eleven

thousand. When at last she was abandoned the fear of contagion prevented any one from going on board or even approaching her. Her planks were soon filled with worms which ceased not from their work until her decaying hull was riddled with holes, when she sank to the bottom of the bay.

Even though an officer Captain Hiester's prison experience was by no means an enviable one. At first he was confined on the *Jersey*, but only remained there six days when he was sent, for a short time, on another hulk, and thence transferred to the snow (a three-masted vessel, resembling a barque) *Mentor*, where were imprisoned his fellow officers of Atlee's Musketry Regiment. The commander of the vessel was Captain Davis. Here they were placed on a short allowance of one half pound pork, and ten ounces of bread per man daily. On September 22d the *Mentor* was taken up the Narrows and anchored between Governors and Gallows Islands. On September 29th they sailed up the North River and dropped anchor opposite Paulus Hook. On October 7th they were landed in New York, where they signed a parole, and the Pennsylvania officers were lodged in the house of Mr. Mariner, on William street. On the eighth of December he was exchanged for Captain Strong, 26th British Regiment, and departed for his home. During his imprisonment, as a result of the treatment accorded him, he had contracted a slow and wasting fever which so weakened him that, in New York, he was obliged to crawl up the stairs on his hands and knees. He arrived at Reading in an emaciated condition, but, with tender care, pure air and healthy food, he gradually acquired his strength and health.

During his captivity he had been promoted to Major, and, on May 17, 1777, he was commissioned Lieut.-

Colonel of the Fourth Battalion, Berks County Militia. In August the First and Second Battalions, under Colonels Hunter and Udree, joined the main army under Washington and participated in the Battle of Brandywine. Undeterred by the recollection of the hardships and sufferings of his past experience Colonel Hiester made every effort to speedily organize his troops, and, in September, the Battalion, with him in command (its elected Colonel, Nicholas Lutz, being still a prisoner on parole) marched to join the Continental Army. It reached them in time for the Battle of Germantown, where, in an advanced skirmish with the enemy, his head was slightly grazed by a bullet. His regiment remained in service until the troops went into camp at Valley Forge, when it was disbanded, although in 1778 he still remained its full Colonel, ready for duty when the call might come.

On April 5, 1779, he was appointed, by the Supreme Executive Council, one of the Commissioners of Exchange, and, on the 21st of October following, one of the committee to seize the personal effects of traitors.

Once more, in 1780, the movements of the British in New York caused great alarm, and, in anticipation of their being directed against Philadelphia itself, 4,000 militia from Pennsylvania were ordered out, to co-operate with Washington and the main army. Of this number the quota for Berks County was 600 men and comprised the Sixth Battalion, under command of Colonel Hiester. Their service lasted from August 10th to September 9th, but was fortunately unattended by active hostilities.

This completed the patriotic, unselfish and valuable military service of Joseph Hiester, which extended through so many years of the war. He then went into partnership with his father-in-law, Adam Witman, in the mercantile

business, and looked forward to a happy family life and peaceful rest in the thriving town of Reading. This, however, was not so to be. His services were too valuable to be spared, and, accordingly, in 1780, he was chosen to the General Assembly, when his public political life began which was to extend, so honorably, over much of the remainder of his life. In this body he served, almost continuously, until 1790.

In May, 1787, the convention to frame the Federal Constitution assembled in Philadelphia. General Washington was elected president and William Jackson secretary. It sat, with closed doors, until September 18th, at which time its labors were completed and the result laid before the Assembly of Pennsylvania for its ratification, when a motion was made to call a State Convention to deliberate upon its adoption. It met on the 21st of November and organized by the election of Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg as president and James Campbell as secretary. Of this body Joseph Hiester was a member. In accordance with his best judgment, and acting upon the conservative lines which influenced the German element of Berks County especially, he had joined the party to which the majority of his fellow-citizens belonged—the Anti-Federalist, and, later, Republican party, which was succeeded by the Democratic. On the 17th of December following, the final adoption of the draft of the Constitution was carried by a vote of forty-six yeas to twenty-three nays. As an Anti-Federalist Mr. Hiester's vote was cast in the negative, and, therefore, his name does not appear signed to the ratification. There was general rejoicing over this Act. The day after, members of the Convention and Supreme Executive Council, with officers of the state, city of Philadelphia, and others, went in procession from

the State House to the old Court House where the ratification was solemnly proclaimed. Twelve cannon were fired and the bells were rung. The Convention then returned to the State House to affix their signatures to duplicate copies of the paper. This, however, the conservative opponents to the measure refused to do, although requested to make the Act unanimous. After its adoption by Pennsylvania the new Federal constitution was referred to the other states, and successively approved by each of them.

With the growth of the nation and state the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 proved inadequate for its effective government, and a revision was demanded. On March 24, 1789, the Assembly recommended the election of delegates to draft a new paper, but the Supreme Executive Council refused to promulgate this action of the Assembly. In September following the latter body passed resolutions for calling a convention; at the election in October delegates were chosen, and, on the fourth Tuesday of November, the convention assembled in Philadelphia, electing Thomas Mifflin as its president. Of this important body Colonel Hiester was also a member, and voted faithfully with the party to which he belonged. Its sessions and deliberations were not concluded until the adoption of the new instrument on September 2, 1790, which was based upon the Constitution of the new Federal Government.

Radical changes were made in the government of the state. The Supreme Executive Council was abolished entirely. The Assembly ceased to have the sole right to make laws, a Senate being added to it. A governor was to be elected to carry out the administration of affairs. The former judicial system was continued, save that the justices of the higher courts held their positions during good behavior instead of for seven years. A Bill of

Rights re-enacted the old provincial provision, embodied in the first Constitution, respecting freedom of worship, rights of conscience and exemptions from compulsory contributions for the support of any ministry. The recognition of God, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, was still demanded of all holding office, but a belief in the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments was not included.

During this convention the right of suffrage came up. Colonel Hiester voted in favor of young men enjoying this privilege who had attained their majority, been residents of the State for two years prior to election, and paid a state or county tax, and was opposed to a resolution granting the right only to such as possessed certain property or enjoyed a specified income. He also voted against a proposition to allow those between twenty-one and twenty-two to cast their suffrage without the payment of any tax. This very proper act on his part was maliciously and ridiculously misconstrued, during his gubernatorial campaign, and used against him, with a certain class of people, to prove his aristocratic tendencies and desire to improperly restrict the right of voting at election.

The number of slaves in Pennsylvania was never excessive, and their treatment materially different from that accorded the like class in the South. In 1790 the total in the state was but 3,737; in 1800 these figures were diminished to 1706; in 1810 there were only 795, and in 1820 but 300, after which they practically disappeared. To bring about this gradual abolition a bill had been enacted by the Assembly, on March 1, 1780, which met with the hearty approval of Mr. Hiester. When, however, in 1788 a supplement to this Act was introduced, which, in his opinion and that of others, was not only unnecessary

but full of imperfections, he signified his disapproval by voting against it. This action was also, later, brought up against him, as a campaign document, to show his lack of desire to emancipate the slaves from their bondage.

Under the new Constitution of the state, creating a Senate, Mr. Hiester was elected to the first body of that branch of the Legislature, and served a full term, from 1790 to 1794, with his usual zeal and fidelity. During this time a system of extensive internal improvements was inaugurated, extending over a term of many years and involving the Commonwealth in heavy debt. As a part of this was the Union Canal, begun in 1792, opening up communication between the Susquehanna and Schuylkill rivers; also the Conewago canal to open and improve the navigation of the Susquehanna from Wright's Ferry to the mouth of the Swatara, and the incorporation of the Bank of Pennsylvania with its various branches. It was during the year 1793 the dreaded pestilence, yellow fever, ravaged Philadelphia, causing a mortality in that city of about five thousand, equal to twenty-two per cent. of those who remained in it. In 1794 occurred the famous "Whiskey Insurrection," and the Legislature was also much occupied with the defence of settlers in the western part of the state who were threatened by the Indians. The latter were defeated, however, on August 20th, by General Wayne, in a such a decisive battle as to remove all further danger of incursion, and contribute materially to the rapid settlement of that portion of Pennsylvania.

In so much esteem was Colonel Hiester held by his fellow-citizens, because of his long and faithful service to his country and state, that, in 1792, he was chosen a Presidential Elector, at which time he assisted in casting the vote of his great Commonwealth for the equally great

patriot, George Washington, as the Chief Magistrate of the United States of America; and, again, in 1796, when John Adams was elected President and Thomas Jefferson Vice-President, he was honored in the same way.

In 1794 he temporarily laid aside the cares and trials of office, and, for a brief time, was permitted to enjoy the society of his family and to look out for his business affairs. It was but for a brief time, however. In 1796 his first cousin, General Daniel Hiester, who represented Berks County in the First, Second, Third and Fourth Congresses, removed to Maryland, and, in 1797, Joseph Hiester took his place, as an honored member of the Fifth Congress from his native county. Here he served his country with the same unselfish fervor which characterized his former life, for five terms, from 1797 to 1807, in the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Congresses.

Of the details of this service it is impossible to speak in a limited biography, which must confine itself more particularly to his services in his native state and for said state. In all the various events of those years he adhered to the principles of his party, and, whilst possibly not prominent as a brilliant and dashing party leader, yet he was none the less an able and faithful worker. The testimony of one who sat beside him for years in the House of Representatives was that he never failed in his duty and was always at his post.

For the next eight years he was able to devote his time entirely to his business. That he was not only an able statesman and patriotic citizen, but, as well, a successful business man is evidenced by the fact that, at his decease, he left an estate valued at four hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars, the greater part of which consisted of bonds and stocks. Still, during all this time he kept thor-

oughly posted up on the political events of the day, and in touch with those whose hands shaped them. The writer of this was particularly struck with that fact in glancing over various letters to Mr. Hiester and his son from his grandfather, the Hon. Matthias Richards, who succeeded the Colonel, in 1807, to his seat in Congress which he retained until 1811.

Again, in 1815, Mr. Hiester was sent to the National House of Representatives by his admiring constituents, where he remained, as a member of the Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses, until his election as Governor, in October, 1820, when Colonel Daniel Udree took his place for the unexpired term.

During his second service in Congress various important measures came up, prominent amongst which were the Missouri Compromise (March, 1820), which involved an important discussion of the slave question in general; the chartering of the new Bank of the United States (March, 1816); the Seminole War (1817-18); the acquisition of Florida (agreed upon February 22, 1819); and the admission of many states into the Union. These, with similar measures and transactions, engaged the public attention for a long time previous to final action. They were vitally different from those with which the Federalists and Republicans, as such, had to do in the past. As a result, old parties were dying out. Even their names were already changing. The latter was soon to be transformed into the present Democratic, and the former gradually merged into what is now the Republican party. This transformation of parties meant and was caused, of course, by a corresponding change in the opinion of individuals. Amongst those who were influenced by sincere patriotic motives to give up their former allegiance was Mr.

Hiester. Rather should we say that he was not in sympathy with the new views which his party were adopting. That he was not alone in his opinions, is evidenced by the list of distinguished men who, at Carlisle, on March 4, 1817, selected him as the standard bearer of the Independent Republican party, in the coming gubernatorial contest. His opponent was William Findlay, nominated by the Democratic Republicans at Harrisburg on the same day. Though unsuccessful at this time he still received a most flattering vote, especially in his own district. Upon the expiration of his term in Congress so great was his popularity amongst his fellow-citizens, who fully recognized his many sterling qualities, that he was triumphantly re-elected, October 18, 1818, to the National body, by the Independent Republicans, over Jonathan Hudson, the nominee of his old party, receiving 1,954 votes to 1,440 cast for his opponent. As the time again drew near for the election of a governor he was once more nominated for that office, although it was with great reluctance he yielded his consent and then only upon the condition that, if successful, he would serve but one term. Mr. Findlay having been renominated by the Democracy, again became his opponent.

For personal vituperation and abuse the campaign then opened has never been equalled in the history of the state. Notwithstanding the deservedly high character of both gentlemen, most disgraceful personal epithets were bandied, shameful accusations made, and ungentlemanly language used. As if the past life and illustrious services of Mr. Hiester were not known to every one he was accused of having voluntarily surrendered to the British on Long Island; of voting, in 1788, to retain the colored people of the state in the bonds of slavery; of opposing, in 1790, the right of suffrage to young men; of aristocratic

tendencies; of ignorance, dotage, and Heaven alone knows what else. Not to be outdone by their adversaries the Federalists retorted in kind.

As a moderate sample of epithets used we have the following resolutions adopted at a Democratic mass meeting held in Kutztown on September 9, 1820:

“Resolved: That we pity the delusion and forgive the weakness of General Hiester in casting himself into the arms of his habitual enemies for the purpose of being raised to a situation for which he never was intended by nature nor qualified by the acquirements of study and experience, and that, upon account of his advanced age and the respectability of his family and connexions, we should be disposed silently to pass over his faults and his follies, his imbecility and his ignorance, was it not that he is aiding and assisting to distract and break down that party to which he owes his frequent elevation to honorable and important stations amongst his fellow-citizens, for which reason we consider it our right and our duty to speak the truth concerning him without fear, favour or affection.

“Resolved: That in our opinion General Hiester is not nor never was possessed of sufficient abilities to enable him to discharge the duties of so important an office as that of Governor of Pennsylvania, in a manner either honorable to himself or beneficial to the state, and we have sufficient reason to apprehend that should he be elected governor we should again be subjected to the pestiferous and disgraceful influence of the infamous John Burns,” etc.

On the other side we have the following choice bit, brought out by an article in the *Franklin Republican* stating that Mr. Hiester had given himself up to the British, which was denounced as a “foul and malicious libel”:

“These libels are published for no other reason than because his fellow-citizens are desirous to manifest the sense of his worth and services, in place of the corrupt and dishonest chief magistrate who now disgraces the chair of the state. The act of fabricating such base, groundless and malicious libels proves the desperate wickedness of those who fabricate them. Who but wicked and malicious men would be so malignant as to select the most honorable and patriotic acts of a man’s life, and represent them as crimes.

“If Joseph Hiester were where most of his compatriots are, mouldering in the earth, no man would be found base or wicked enough to detract from his revolutionary worth and services. From interested men, from office holders, from Liars and Slanderers, I appeal TO THE PEOPLE, not doubting but they will do justice and reward merit.”

The result of such a campaign could never be doubted. Colonel Hiester was completely vindicated by a grand victory. The majority against him, in 1817, was 7,005, whilst the majority in his favor, in 1820, was 1,605. The victory was the more glorious because it was accomplished by a rousing majority for him in his own town and county, both strongly Democratic. Indeed, he was, and still is, the only instance of any one to whom Berks County ever gave a majority of its votes, outside of the regular and sole nominee of the Democratic party. The vote in Reading (with a census of 4,332) stood, for Hiester 1652, for Findlay 525, and, in the county, for Hiester 4,355, for Findlay 2,757.

It was a great victory, not only for Mr. Hiester but still greater for the Federalist, or Independent Republican, party, as he was the first successful gubernatorial candidate whom they had been able to place in the field against their opponents.

An immense ovation was given him at Reading, on November 1st. After a grand procession, speeches by distinguished visiting politicians, and music, followed by a feast, at the head of Penn street, for which two large oxen, a bear and a hog were roasted entire, came toasts, patriotic sentiments, more music and parade, the whole winding up with a glorious torch light procession in the evening.

The inaugural ceremonies were held on Tuesday, December 20, 1820, when Governor Hiester took the oath of office in the presence of the members of the Senate and House of Representatives, and a crowd of spectators. His administration was a most successful one and met with general approval.

The memory of the disgraceful campaign through which he had passed, and the unjust criticisms of himself, as well as Governor Findlay, his opponent, were still fresh in his mind when he penned his inaugural address, and causes him thus to allude to it: "I trust if any errors shall be committed, they will not be chargeable to intention; they will owe their origin to the imperfection of our nature and the narrow limits of human foresight; they will not proceed from a wilful neglect of duty on my part, nor for any want of devotion to the best interests of our beloved country. Such errors, I may justly hope, will meet with indulgence from an enlightened and liberal people."

Besides this he touches on the living questions of the day which occupied the attention of the Assembly during his term of office, and thus gives us, as it were, a succinct skeleton of the after events of his administration.

In it, also, we may get a hint of the causes which led to his change of party, from his opinions expressed on the topics which then engrossed the attention of the two ex-

isting political parties. The copy of his inaugural address, dated December 19, 1820, in the hands of the writer, is printed on white silk and is a memento of the occasion.

After thanking his fellow-citizens for elevating him to that high position, he expresses his determination, with Divine help, to faithfully perform the duties of his office. He reminds them of the many difficulties in his way, asks their hearty co-operation in his labors, and invites sincere and honest criticism of his work. He then goes on as follows:

“Considering myself as elected by the people of this Commonwealth and not by any particular denomination of persons, I shall endeavor to deserve the name of Chief Magistrate of Pennsylvania, and to avoid the disgraceful appellation of Governor of a party. In appointments to office it will be my endeavor to select, without distinction of party, such as I shall believe to be the most honest and capable, and if I shall be successful in this respect, I trust that with the assistance of your wisdom and patriotic endeavors in matters of legislation, the prosperity of the Commonwealth may be promoted, its relations with the general government honorably upheld, and all its lawful rights maintained.

“In deliberating upon the concerns of the Commonwealth, gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives, you will find one of the most prominent topics to be the stagnation of trade and business of every description, the almost total annihilation of confidence between man and man, and the distress of many individuals of the community. If anything could be done to encourage and revive the activity of our citizens; if any means could be devised to restore confidence and to prevent the sacrifice of property, with due attention to the rights of all parties,

I should most heartily concur in any measures calculated to attain these desirable ends. Permit me to suggest to you whether it would not be possible to devise some method of reducing the enormous power and patronage of the Governor, without impairing the other general features of our present excellent constitution; whether the annual sessions of our Legislature might not be shortened without detriment to the public good; whether a reduction of salaries, of fees of office and compensation for public services, might not at this time take place, to correspond in some degree with the reduced prices of agricultural produce. It also deserves serious consideration whether public improvements might not at this time be advantageously made, and domestic manufactures encouraged with success. Above all it appears an imperative duty to introduce and support a liberal system of education connected with some general religious instruction. These are matters which will certainly engage your attention, and will probably be objects of your deliberations, and if any adequate measures shall be proposed it would give me great pleasure to be instrumental in their promotion."

He ends up by asking all to unite in laboring to promote the common good, and, once more, petitions the Divine blessing to rest upon their work, to the whole of which he attaches his name.

One of the prominent occurrences during Governor Hiester's term was the occupation of the new capitol building, on January 3, 1822. In November, 1799, the Legislature was transferred from Philadelphia to the new State Capitol, Lancaster, where it remained until the summer of 1812 when Harrisburg became the seat of government. The corner-stone of the Capitol was laid by Governor Findlay on May 31, 1819, with imposing ceremonies, but

the erection of the building occupied two years. It was destroyed by fire on February 2, 1897, and has been replaced by the present structure.

The first subject, of importance, which received attention during his administration was that of internal improvement. In February, 1821, a bill was introduced and passed chartering various canal and turnpike companies, and authorizing state subscriptions to the same amounting to some \$50,000, chiefly for the Union Canal already in course of construction.

Other matters given attention were the reduction of salaries of public officers and fees, and the establishment of a new militia system. An Act of especial interest to his native place was that of February 4, 1822, authorizing the erection of a home for the employment and support of the poor in the county of Berks.

So much is said about the common school law of 1834 that we are apt to overlook the facts and acts which led to it. One of these was the introduction of the so-called "Lancasterian System." It was so named after its author, Joseph Lancaster, an Englishman, whose idea was to instruct the largest possible number of children with the smallest possible outlay of means and teaching force, to which end the older scholars were used to teach the younger, thus communicating knowledge to each other. Imperfect as was this method yet it was the progenitor of the later excellent system, and may be justly called the first Public School Law, as that passed prior to it, in 1809, degenerated the whole thing to a mere pauper education. Under this Act the city and county of Philadelphia was erected into the "first school district of Pennsylvania," in 1818, and, through the recommendation and approval of Governor Hiester, the city and county of Lancaster became

"the second school district" during the session of 1822.

Too long have the motives and actions of the Pennsylvania-Germans, regarding our school system, been misconstrued, and too tardy has been the justice which is only now being accorded them. The interest and zeal manifested by Governor Hiester in the advancement of our educational methods have never been conspicuously mentioned in print and seem to be utterly unknown. It may not be so generally remembered that much of the present prosperity of our great University of Pennsylvania is owing to the zealous efforts of the German Lutheran divines of early days and their successors. To the Rev. Drs. Kunze and Helmuth belongs the credit for the establishment of the "German Department" which accomplished such excellent results in its day, and from which, in 1787, was derived Franklin College, at Lancaster, in whose interest the best German elements were, for a time, united, and amongst whose patrons were Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush. The chief honor for the establishment of that institution belongs to the Reverends Helmuth, Hendel, Weyberg and H. E. Muhlenberg, who was its first president, all Pennsylvania-German Lutheran clergymen. Joseph Hiester was one of its original trustees, and amongst the signatures to the peculiar address issued to the Germans of Pennsylvania after the charter had been granted by the state, was that of Daniel Hiester. We have just seen how his efforts did not stop there but widened out so as to include the entire public.

Governors Wolf and Ritner may well be held up as shining examples of what Pennsylvania-German governors have accomplished in the cause of public school education, but before them, and on as high a pedestal beside them, towers the figure of Joseph Hiester, through whose veins coursed the same blood.

After most ably and faithfully performing the manifold duties of his office, and firmly refusing to permit his name to be again used as a candidate for the position, although repeatedly solicited to do so by his admiring and appreciative fellow-citizens, he retired into private life on December 16, 1823.

In his last annual message he expresses many sentiments showing his strong love for the state and zeal for her welfare and progress, concluding as follows:

“Having been for nearly fifty years occasionally engaged in various highly responsible situations in the service of my country, and having witnessed its progress from colonial vassalage to independence and sovereignty, it is with most sincere pleasure that, on quitting the theatre of action, I can congratulate you and our fellow citizens at large on the propitious situation in which it is now placed; and I avail myself of the occasion it affords me of repeating my fervent prayers to the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, under whose superintending influence it has attained its present eminence, that he may continue to cherish it with his fostering care, preserving its citizens in the free enjoyment of their just rights and republican institutions, until all earthly governments shall be terminated by the consummation of time.”

Joseph Hiester was held in esteem by all who knew him; a sincere friend; a loving parent and faithful husband; a true Christian; an unostentatious but most able official, sound to the core in the conscientious discharge of all his duties; a capable and successful business man, and true patriot. If this biography has failed to bring out these facts it has failed in its purpose.

He was of commanding presence, about six feet tall and

weighing some two hundred pounds. His manners were always most pleasant and unassuming, attracting every one to him and causing those who survived him to affectionately recall their memory of him. He frequently visited his farms. Mr. John Sailor, who had charge of that on the Kutztown road, at "Hiester's Lane" (now in North Reading) delighted, in after years, to relate the successful manner in which he threshed out grain with a flail, during a visit in 1825.

Upon the expiration of his term of office he lived, in retirement, in Reading, on the northern side of Penn street, between Fourth and Fifth streets (on the western half of lot No. 30 in town plan, now No. 437 Penn street). The building was a two-story brick dwelling, having a large frame stable on the rear of the lot. He owned a number of farms in Alsace (now Muhlenberg), Cumru and Bern Townships, and also tracts of woodland on Mt. Penn, the whole numbering nearly two thousand acres, also seven prominent business stands and dwellings in Reading, with various out lots.

His wife, Elizabeth (née Witman), who was born April 2, 1750, died June 11, 1825. He survived her for seven years, dying June 10, 1832, in the home which he had occupied for two-score years. In accordance with his wishes there was no military or other ostentatious display, but, nevertheless, a very large concourse of mourning friends followed his body, on the 13th of June, to its resting place in the graveyard of the First German Reformed church of Reading, Pa., at Sixth and Washington streets, of which congregation he was a consistent member and trustee. Some years later, probably in 1870 when most of the bodies were reinterred, the remains of the Governor and his wife were removed to the Charles Evans cemetery, of the same city.

Their children were:

1. Catharine (eldest daughter) who married, April 1, 1798, Judge John Spayd, of Reading (Jan. 1764 to Oct. 13, 1822), with whom she had issue Elizabeth, b. May 7, 1799, m. Edward B. Hubley, M.C.; John, b. Aug. 13, 1800, M. D. University of Penna.; Catharine B., b. Oct. 13, 1801, m. John B. Brooke, of Reading; Joseph H., b. Oct. 7, 1803, of Berks County bar; George Adam Witman, b. Sept. 12, 1807, a Chief Burgess of Reading; John Christian, b. March 23, 1810, M. D. University of Penna.; Amelia, b. Oct. 5, 1812, m. Dr. Diller Luther, of Reading.

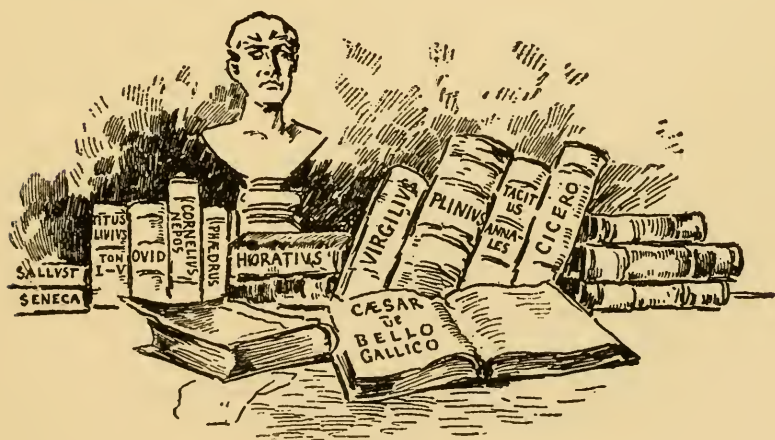
2. John S. (July 28, 1774 to March 7, 1849), a graduate of Princeton 1794; admitted to Philadelphia bar 1798; practised in Berks County and, for nine years, had all the offices in connection with the county courts, for which he was qualified. He married, 1st, Miss Fries, of Philadelphia, who died six months later, and, 2d, Mary Catharine Muhlenberg (May 29, 1774, to Nov. 28, 1846), daughter of Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg, Speaker of the First Congress. Their children were Joseph Muhlenberg (Dec. 11, 1806, to Feb. 15, 1881), m. Isabella Craig McLanahan (Dec. 11, 1812, to Jan. 8, 1892); Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg (Sept. 17, 1808, to July 6, 1868), m. Lydia Ann Garretson (Dec. 20, 1814, to Nov. 5, 1875); Catharine Elizabeth (April 4, 1810, to June 7, 1885), m. Hon. John Pringle Jones (June 10, 1812, to March 17, 1874); Elizabeth Margaretta (May 31, 1812, to Dec. 4, 1827); Eugenia Frances (Dec. 3, 1813, to Dec. 3, 1849), m. 1st, William John Sheaff (— May 4, 1839), and, 2d, James Murray Rush.

3. Elizabeth, m. Levi Pawling and had issue Joseph, Henry, m. Anna Bull, Elizabeth, m. Thomas Ross, James, Rebecca, Ellen and Mary.

4. Rebecca (July 4, 1781, to Jan. 22, 1841), m. June 7, 1808, Henry Augustus Muhlenberg (May 13, 1782, to Aug. 11, 1844), son of Gotthilf Henry Ernst Muhlenberg, himself a noted Lutheran clergyman, later Minister to Austria, etc. They had issue, Emma Elizabeth; Hiester Henry (Jan. 15, 1812, to May 5, 1886), m. 1st, Amelia Hanoed (1818 to 1852), 2d, Kate Spang Hunter (May 19, 1835); Henry Augustus; Emma Elizabeth (May 5, 1817, to Nov. 25, 1833); Rosa Catharine (1820 to May 15, 1867), m. Gustavus Anthony Nicolls (April 3, 1817, to May 18, 1886); Henry Augustus (July 21, 1823, to Jan. 9, 1854), m. Ann Hall Muhlenberg.

5. Adam (a twin) born 1784.

6. Mary Elizabeth (1784, to March 21, 1806), m. 1805, Henry Augustus Muhlenberg, who afterwards married her sister. They had one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Hiester (March 21, 1806, to Feb. 21, 1838), m. Ehrgott Jonathan Deininger (Sept. 10, 1801, to Aug. 24, 1880), but left no living issue.



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